

AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS INVITED TO 'VOICE' THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Submitted by: National Association of Karate and Martial Art Schools - NAKMAS

Tuesday, 29 January 2013

Sandra Ellis, a doctoral student of Sheffield Hallam University, is in the midst of exciting new research exploring factors impacting on the informal education learning experience for young autistic students.

Ellis, who herself has a clinical diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome, an intellectually high functioning presentation of autism, teaches young autistic students karate and dance in addition to being responsible for a national coaching programme for sports coaches including autism awareness. She also speaks on the National Autistic Society's Post Graduate Certificate in Asperger's Syndrome which is run in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University.

She hopes that her research will eventually inform an inclusive curriculum where the diversity of young learners is valued and recognised as well as inform the professional development of teachers.

The study is in three phases, all of which are now in progress. Sandra is now calling for more individuals of all ages with Asperger's and High Functioning Autism, to participate in the study and let their 'voice' to be heard.

Ellis said: 'participation is very easy and completely anonymous. Simply log onto my website home page and click onto the three virtual 'walls' highlighted where you can 'post' notes with your thoughts and experiences on three related topics. The message can be as short or as long as you want it to be. You can be any age, but the postings relate to your childhood experiences of informal learning. It is your chance to be heard without the pressure of face to face interaction.'

Dr Luke Beardon from Sheffield Hallam's Autism Centre and Sandra's Director of Studies, said: 'This is an exciting opportunity for students with autism to have their voices heard and to potentially make a difference to how they are taught'.

'Sandra is embarking on a truly emancipatory research doctorate that could help educators involved with autistic children enormously. I hope that she gets hundreds of responses on her virtual wall to best understand the perceptions of this diverse group of students'.

To take part in the study, visit www.challengeautism.co.uk and click on the links. The website celebrates differences of autism and has useful information as well.

To read or sign up to Ellis's on-line blog visit www.challengeautism.wordpress.com .

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Sheffield Hallam University
Doctorate in Education Programme
2010-2014

Also www.kentkarateschools.co.uk for further details of classes.

National Autistic Society

<http://www.autism.org.uk/our-services/training-and-consultancy/accredited-university-programmes/postgraduate-certificate-in->